

HSK 5 Grammar 25: Comparing similar auxiliary words

HSK 5 总算 and 终于, taught from the reviewed topic handout; classroom examples, not official exam items.

Phew, or at last?

总算 — informal relief

雨下了一整天，我们总算回到宿舍了。

Finally — phew.

终于 — neutral 'at last'

代表们讨论了五个小时，终于通过了这项规定。

A calm report that the wait ended.

终于 can carry bad news

- 1 **Good news, relief** 孩子的烧退了，妈妈总算能睡觉了。
- 2 **Bad news, reported** 资金不够，新桥修了两年，终于停工了。
- 3 **Why not 总算 here?** 总算 would sound glad; a glad tone clashes with a shortage of money.

Decision

News and formal writing use 终于 for good and bad results; 总算 is a personal, relieved voice.

Where the adverb goes

- 1 **The frame** Subject + 总算 / 终于 + verb (+ 了).
- 2 **Right** 我总算把报告交给经理了。
- 3 **Uncommon or wrong** 总算我把报告交给经理了 is rare; 我把报告交给经理总算了 is wrong.

Decision

Learn 总算 after the subject; 终于 usually sits there too and only sometimes opens a sentence.

Your turn: the home team

Your turn

You support the home team and are unhappy that they lost after three hours. Choose the best sentence.

- A. 比赛进行了三个小时，主队总算输了。
- B. 比赛进行了三个小时，主队终于输了。
- C. 比赛进行了三个小时，总算主队输了。

Your turn: the queue

Your turn

排队排了四十分钟，我们 _____ 坐上地铁了。You are texting a friend, relieved.

A. 终于

B. 总算

Answers: relief or report

- 1 **The lost match** 比赛进行了三个小时，主队终于输了。
- 2 **The queue** 排队排了四十分钟，我们总算坐上地铁了。
- 3 **The library** 我总算在图书馆借到那本书了。
- 4 **Same event, two voices** 学校的食堂终于关闭了。· 学校的食堂总算关闭了。

Decision

The canteen user who is unhappy reports with 终于; the neighbour who hated the noise feels relief with 总算.

Check yourself

Your turn

A news report: after ten years of debate, the old stadium was finally demolished.
Which word fits the report?

- A. 经过十年的讨论，老体育场终于被拆除了。
- B. 经过十年的讨论，老体育场总算被拆除了。